



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

DIVINE PROTECTION FOR THE FAITHFUL DURING PERSECUTION

Daniel 3:19-30

Some kinds of questions naturally provoke God to action. Such questions might intimidate the fearful but they embolden the faithful whose hearts are full of faith in their God. ***“But if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”*** What a question! It is a question that always provokes divine action, a question that produces supernatural miracle, a question that demands the manifestation of God’s supremacy and extra-ordinary power. When unbelieving despots ask such questions, God always responds to protect His own and to silence the blasphemer, ***“And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”*** (Daniel 3:15). The king, himself later confessed, ***“there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.”*** ***“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase”*** (Daniel 3:29; 4:37). Pharaoh also asked a similar blasphemous question and later received a sudden shocking, supernatural answer in devastating signs and wonders (Exodus 5:2; 10:16,17;12:31,32; 14:25,31). Sennacherib, the king of Assyria during the reign of Hezekiah over Judah also asked, ***“Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?”*** (2 Kings 18:35). With one stroke of supernatural judgment, 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians were stricken dead and the king himself was smitten with the sword of his own sons (2 Kings 19:35-37). The Creator of heaven and earth is too great and mighty to be challenged by any of His creatures. The Potter is too powerful and irresistible to be reproached by the clay (Romans 9:20). True believers can rest, unmoved, in the face of any provocation or pressure from our persecutors and our adversaries. ***“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace”*** (Daniel 3:17).

THE PERSECUTION OF NON-CONFORMISTS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3:19-23; 1 Kings 19:1,2; 22:13,14,23,24; Esther 3:3-6; Daniel 6:10-17; Mark 6:17-20; John 15:18-21; 1 Peter 4:3,4; Acts 16:19-26; 2 Timothy 3:12-14.

God loves faithful, uncompromising believers. Non-conformists who refuse to be conformed to this world are His delight. Yet we must remember that the world and the god of this world hate whatever and whoever God loves. Nebuchadnezzar, the Gentile king was enraged by the refusal of these three faithfuls to worship his image. In his rage the tyrannical idol worshipper invented a more strange and cruel punishment for these God-honouring saints. And these saintly servants of God remained calm, patient and constant in their devotion to God. They knew that God had power to deliver them from death or if He desired to take them to a better place than this world, could deliver them from the despot for ever. The king was not only furious, he was infatuated. ***“He commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.”*** The great intensity of the heat of his fury could not be satisfied without a greater intensity of heat in the furnace. His anger was visible for all to see. Being ***“full of fury, the form of his visage was changed”*** (verse 19). Betrayed in his whole comportment and countenance he ordered that the heat of the furnace be increased to the highest possible. Passion overdoes and defeats its own end, for, the hotter the fire, the sooner were they likely to be put out of pain. Would men in a passion but view their faces in a mirror, they would be startled at their own folly and turn all their displeasure against themselves. We need not be frightened by the rage, fury and devise of persecutors. Persecution purifies and preserves the true children of God; it revives our dormant faith in some forgotten promises of God (for example, Isaiah 43:2); it brings God’s omnipotence and faithfulness nearer in manifestation. Persecution drives us to prayer and more dependence on God.

THE PROTECTION OF NEW CREATURES IN THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel 3:24-27; Isaiah 43:2-4; Exodus 3:2-4; Psalm 66:12-16; Zechariah 13:9; Hebrews 11:33,34; Zechariah 3:1,2; Isaiah 26:11-13; 1 Peter 4:12-14; Ephesians 6:16.

There are precious promises we can never prove until we encounter some problems and pressures. There is a kind of sweet juice of the grapes of grace which can only be pressed out by the hand of providence. There are states of divine companionship which can only be experienced when we find ourselves in situations where human companionship is impossible. There is a depth of divine love and intimate fellowship known only to believers who courageously face the opposition of the world against righteousness. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had a fresh understanding, a divine

contact and companionship, an intimate fellowship, a new revelation of God's power, an experience of security and immunity, a fulfilment of an incredible promise, a supernatural sign and wonder, in the furnace which they could not have had outside the furnace. They lost nothing inside the furnace, rather they gained incalculable spiritual wealth, immediate earthly rewards and heaven's enduring recognition. We lose nothing in the furnace of persecution, rather our profit and rewards are abundant in the present life and in eternity. "**Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished.**" He was yet to learn that God is able with infinite ease to deliver His children in the most terribly extreme situations. He knows how to deliver the godly out of fiery trials and grant His own a perfect triumph over the rage of their enemies. Nebuchadnezzar's confession is significant and worthy of our meditation; (1) "**Did not we cast three men BOUND into the midst of the fire? lo, I see four men LOOSE**" (2) "**walking in the midst of the fire**" (3) "**and they have no hurt**" (4) "**and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.**" The king and all his men examined them when they came out of the furnace. They all (5) "**saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power**", (6) "**nor was an hair of their head singed**" (7) "**neither were their coats changed**", (8) "**nor the smell of fire had passed on them.**" There is both instruction and encouragement in the climax of the king's confession and declaration: "**There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.**" Those who suffer for Christ have His gracious presence with them in their persecution, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore need fear no evil.

THE PROMOTION OF NOBLE CONQUERORS AFTER FEARLESS FAITHFULNESS

Daniel 3:28-30; 6:1-3; 2:47-49; 6:26-28; Psalms 34:7,8,22; 75:6,7; 91:14-16; John 12:26; Job 42:10,12; Genesis 41:39-43.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego" (Daniel 3:28). He had earlier said, "**Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?**" (Daniel 3:15). Now he has come to recognize the existence and power of that God and His involvement in the affairs of men on earth. He referred to God as "**the most high God**" who has no equal, rival or comparison, for He said, "**there is no other God that can deliver after this sort**" (Daniel 3:26,29). The manifestation of God's presence and the demonstration of God's power changed the king's mind. God's faithfulness in response to our faith can change the attitude and life of the most idolatrous and wicked sinner. Nebuchadnezzar's god could not deliver or protect his "**most mighty men**" (Daniel 3:20,22) but "**the most high God**" delivered "**His (own) servants that trusted in Him**" who would "**not serve nor worship any god, except their own God**" (Daniel 3:28). Dead idols are impotent but the living God is omnipotent. Truly, there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. So he blessed God for His goodness and for His power. Nebuchadnezzar's praise and confession of God was doctrinally sound and widely publicized but he did not renounce his god, neither did he destroy the image which he had set up. There was no genuine conversion, there was no decision to worship the living God only. Loud and empty confession without genuine, life-transforming conversion is worthless in God's sight. "**Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.**" He reversed his earlier negative decision concerning these three faithful men, restored them to positions of honour and even promoted them to greater places of service and usefulness. Seeing their uncompromising loyalty and faithfulness to their God he could trust them more as men of high moral standard and unwavering, righteous principle.

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